



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE CRAYON.

VOL. II. NO. XX.]

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 14, 1855.

[WHOLE NO. XLIV.]

THE INFLUENCES OF NATURE.

"To him, who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language." DEKAY.

WHEN we know there is so much depending upon the temporary state of the mind and body to fit us for the enjoyment of any object or scene of beauty, we are inclined to believe that there may be times, when those least susceptible, by some fortuitous combination of influences, may be alive to a sense of the beautiful. At all events, in some phase or other, Nature is denied to none of us. "Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate. It is his, if he wills," says Emerson. Goldsmith exclaims, "creation's heir, the world, the world is mine!" Of course, as various as are the temperaments of man, are the effects of this grand bequest on each recipient. We find about us those who seem to be perfectly insensible to any value in the boon, as well as such as Shelley describes in his Alaster, when he says:

"Nature's most secret steps,
He like her shadow has pursued."

Take the juxtaposition of two stanzas in Wordsworth, and note how he has marked the difference:

"At noon, when by the forest edge,
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft, blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft, blue sky!

"On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been
A thing as steadfast as the scene,
On which they gazed themselves away."

If we are not touched by one phase, we may be moulded by another, as in Wordsworth again:

"Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent weather,
And tender sound, yet you might see
At once that Peter Bell, and she
Had often been together.

"A savage wildness round him hung,
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure and his mien,
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors."

Peculiar dispositions aside, we may say that the general effect of the Nature of the country on our feelings is one of repose. This is why so many flee to it, to still the disquiet that the activities of life have produced. Humboldt leaving the tumultuous Europe of Napoleon's day, and going abroad to the contemplation of nature, acknowledges the grateful change, as one of a soothing balm to his spirits. Even the remembrance of her may have a like effect, as Wordsworth testifies in those pregnant lines, written in the neighborhood of Tintern Abbey, when he writes—

"Oft in lonely places, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration."

The visitor at Frankfurt, to-day, is shown the window, where the boy Goethe sought a more favorable state of mind for the conning of his lessons, because he could look out on the trees and shrubbery of his neighbor's garden. And we are not ignorant how, in his ripest years, he used to drown his afflictions in communing with Nature and her laws. A true worshipper of Nature, did Richter study and write amid the groves, and upon the meadows, and he could not reënter the streets of Bayreuth, without bringing a flower at his button-hole. We cannot mistake the mood in which Keats, in his intercourse with nature, could exclaim—

"In spite of all
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits."

And even when dying, how the repose of a secluded grave-yard must have come soothingly upon his soul, when he said to his attendants, "I begin to feel the flowers growing above me." Can we not all of us recall some such a night of calm serenity as Byron must have known, when he wrote,

"Although to rest
Is almost wronging such a night as this?"

Truly, it was not without reason that the ancient philosophers used to assemble in groves in the pursuit of their cogitations. Nor is the class of these extinct to-day, who

"Steal from the degenerate crowd,
And soar above this little scene of things."

Again, let us take the testimony of a devotee of Art. Vasari says, "To view the rural prospect of morning and evening, so soothes my mind, that next to God, I am indebted to it for the tranquillity I enjoy." Or mark how Irving turns a scientific discovery to the expression of like sensations. "As the leaves of trees are said to absorb all noxious qualities of the air, and to breathe forth a purer atmosphere, so it seems to me, as if they drew from us all sordid and angry passions, and breathed forth peace and philanthropy. There is a serene and settled majesty in woodland scenery, that enters into the soul, and dilates and elevates it, and fills it with noble inclinations."

Nature seems to present no phenomena, but that to some one, it brings an influence to bear upon his spirits. "I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon," says Burns, "or the wild, mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul, like the enthusiasm of devotion in poetry." The love of Nature, in some phase or other, is indisputably inherent in the character of man. Cowper betrays no lack of confidence in it.

"'Tis born with all; the love of Nature's work
Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infused at the creation of the kind."

We are not all poets, but we all have something of the poetic sense. We will not vouch for the highest appreciation of natural beauty in the immature city,

"Whose garden in which nothing thrives has charms
That sooth the rich possessor,"

nor for the truest sense of the beautiful in the housemaid, who every morning waters her window-full of flowers,

"Sickly samples of the exuberant whole,"

but when she stoops to scent the fragrance of a rose, or carefully plucks off a leaf that is dead, as if feeling that it was a burden and a pain to the plant, we may well believe we recognize a trace of the "inborn, inextinguishable thirst of rural scene." Something like this, as well as motives of economy, we willingly allow may actuate the crowds that give up the conveniences of city life for a suburban abode, although it may be no benefit to

"Breathe a cloud of dust, and call it country air."

Something of the same kind, too, impels the rush from our crowded cities, in the summer months, and induces people to think themselves comfortable in a lodgment five stories above ground, and of the size of pig-sties, that form the prospect of the back windows of a rural hotel.

Scott acknowledges that this love of nature became with him (more especially when allied to recreations) an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, he would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe.

Campbell felt the innate love of Nature, only as he had seen her at second hand, and thus he wrote his "Pleasures of Hope," but soon after he visited the continent, when we find him writing in this manner: "Formerly I talked of scenery from pictures and the imagination, but now I feel elevated to an enthusiasm, when I scour the woods of gigantic oak, the bold and beautiful hills, the shores and rocks upon the Danube." The garden of Twickenham proves for Pope a yearning for the beauties and variety of Nature, and even if not always directed with the utmost taste, we think he does not deserve the censures of those who deny him all susceptibilities in such matters. Truly, we do not exactly like his negative phraseology in the following remark, for a true poet ought, it would seem, to speak with too much fervor to allow it. Yet there are, perhaps, reasons for it, applicable as much to his age as to himself. "I believe," he writes, "it is no wrong observation, that persons of genius, and those who are most capable of art, are always most fond of nature." We shall have a word to say in investigation of this statement a little later.

Cowley writes with an humble earnestness, that seems characteristic of his being. "I never had any other desire," he says to Evelyn, "so like to covetousness as that one which I have always had—that I might be the master at last of a small house and large garden, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of flowers and the study of Nature." And lastly we might quote from the "Castle of Indolence,"

"I care not, Fortune, what you may deny,
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace,"

to show in what a mood Thomson contemplated the aspects of Nature, if, indeed, it is not known already by inference to every

one, as readers of the "Seasons." We come to consider more particularly the influence of Nature on individual men, more in reference to their peculiar dispositions, and the force of habit, or association, which constitutes in their own mental existence the medium, as it were, through which all else is viewed. There is also a medium, without ourselves, which it is not necessary to be dwelt upon, as that of the weather, which in the experience of all, may modify the influence a prospect or a phenomenon may exert upon us. In recognizing this outer medium, Humboldt remarks, that in the same manner as natural scenery is changed by it, does nature affect us in proportion as it harmonizes with the condition of our own feelings, since the physical world is reflected with truth and animation on the inner susceptible world of the mind. When we consider that through this outer medium, nature can produce in us, sympathetically a corresponding sensation, we are not surprised at the stormy energy of Burns' "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," when we know that it was composed as the author galloped in the midst of a tempest over the wildest of the Galloway moors. We cannot now read that spirited dithyrambic without recalling its remarkable accompaniment. It was a similar influence, working a different way, that led Gibbon to his theme of the "Decline and Fall," as he sat amid the ruins of the Coliseum.

Viewing Nature in the light of individual idiosyncrasies, we find naturally different men receiving varied impressions from the same scene. The artist and the farmer are not likely to have the same notions of a plain, and the engineer will probably look upon it in a way different from either, when he admires it for the ease in which a railway could be laid across it, and contemplates the width of its river to compute the cost of its bridges. Or if the prospect be viewed only for its scenery, we find the best proof we can have of its internal meaning, in the various interpretations that are put upon it, springing from the varied characters of those who observe it. This is precisely analogous to the way in portraiture, that the artist invests whatever person he may paint with something, that at once points to him, as the artist, or to one of his school. Thus the heads of Titian, Rubens, Vandike, Rembrandt, and Reynolds, have all the same mark of their varied minds, the tint of the medium through which they were observed. Spenser has recognized the mental stamp upon scenery, by the way that he has assigned his backgrounds in accordance with the characteristics of his personifications. And the way in which that school of poets, called the Lakers, differ from one another, only show their constitutional dissimilarity, as manifested in their varied impressions from the same region of natural scenery.

The influence of the power of association in nature, does not need much elucidation. There are many to whom this influence is superior to all others. Scott, and we would naturally imagine it in such an one, confesses that when he wandered over the field of Bannockburn, he found it the source of more exquisite delight, than when he gazed upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle. "Show me," he says, "an old castle, or a field of

battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description." Whatever may be the comparative beauty of the scenery of the Hudson or the Rhine, the greater number of legendary associations, that hover, as it were, like clouds of mist, about the summits of the banks of the German river, clothe it with a species of interest, that the few, which have been made to cling about some localities of our own stream, can bear little comparison with. Thanks, however, to one, whom there is no need of naming, our American river does not glide on, totally devoid of what adds so much to the potency of all scenery.

We have next to consider the amount of enjoyment an artist derives from the contemplation of Nature, and whether it be more than falls to the lot of an ordinary observer. There is undeniably awarded to the artist a greater share of that coarser kind of enjoyment (or perhaps it may be merely interest) which is granted to any professional man in surveying the field of his labors. He better understands the technicalities of the scene, or what would be the technicalities, when it were transferred to canvas, and an increase of knowledge of anything adds greatly to the interest in all things that it can be made to bear upon. Thus, on the other hand, Scott confesses that his lack of love for the mere picturesque in scenery, arose from his inability to dissect the various parts of the scene with the eye of a painter, and to comprehend how the one bore upon the other, and to estimate the effect of its varied features in producing its leading and general effect.

Nor are we to doubt, that the artist has other and more noble impulses, which induce him to become a disciple of Nature, than those which, the mere pursuit of a profession may instigate. Those who are familiar with the sublimest of Turner's pictures, will know that he could never have arrived at their efficiency and truth, without more hardships, necessitated to accomplish it, than a mere enriosity or mercenary inclination would have undergone. What but a similar spirit could have induced Vernet, to sit, pencil in hand, studying the forms and tumult of the mighty waves, when all else on board were bewailing their imminent peril? Something of the same kind, it surely was, that prompted a Mungo Park and a Humboldt to the suffering of such expeditions as were theirs, and brought death upon Pliny in the crater of a volcano.

The question now arises, if they who make a profession of the study of Nature, can as well discern her internal meanings, and be sensitive to all her more delicate expressions, as they, who only render up to her their most susceptible qualities to be acted upon without any regard to the future reproduction of what they observe and feel? We can hardly doubt, when we recall some of the first of artists, that never a non-artistic observer was so much alive, to all that is worthy, in Nature; but when we see so many of the minor artists pass off upon the public such exaggerations and untruths, daring to produce substitutes for Nature, rather than interpretations of her, we cannot believe that there is necessarily

produced in the mere professional study of Nature, any greater appreciation and enjoyment of her works, than is the boon of an ordinary person, moderately susceptible. We are happy in bringing to our aid the frank testimony of a painter, who has written but recently, that "An artist studies Nature more deeply, but the necessity to reproduce clogs his flow of feeling, technical considerations cumber it, and there is something in the thought of reporting for the newspapers, as it were, which restrains the joyousness and freedom of her communications. We doubt if any artist feels so impressively the spirit of her teaching, as he would, if free to go into the temple, and catch the inspiration without attention to the forms. It was in this way that the Greeks felt her, and in this way the true imaginative artist should, if it were not there is demanded a compromise between his enjoyment and his calling, to tell the world what he sees." Was it not perhaps the inspiration remaining, when the forms had faded before his declining sight, that made the nature of Milton's Paradise Lost superior to that of Comus, when he saw the forms before him? There is something in a scene of surpassing beauty, it seems to us, that absolutely refuses to be recorded on the spot. It says to us, Go thy way and it shall return to thee! We feel that it would be converging the thronging ecstasies to take pen or pencil, and deliberately trace its features. We feel as if we wanted to sleep on it, and let the remembrance of it the next day picture it anew before our vision, with something of a mystic power. Turn to Christopher North on the Moors, and we shall find he has said much the same thing. "We love scenes of beautiful repose too profoundly, ever to dream of transferring them to canvas. Such employment would be felt by us to be desecration—though we look with delight on the work when done by others—the picture without the process—the product of genius without thought of its mortal instruments."

We have now a broader view to take of the Influence of Nature, as upon men collectively, in communities or nations, either through the effects of climate or the general aspect of scenery. Thus to the people of the north, and to those of the south, to a maritime nation and an inland one, we ascribe readily certain qualities, as naturally in accordance with their position, physically on the earth, which qualities are shown as well in their bodily as mental development, and regulate the tenor of their deeds and thoughts. Thus the Scandinavians placed hell in a region of chilly ice, and the Mussulman imagined for his paradise a shady grove.

Literatures also, as well as Religions, bear a sign of the soil from which their authors spring.

"He who would the Poet know,
Must to the Poet's country go."

Says Goethe, as if to show how intimately Nature, in peculiar localities, is connected with the characters of the poets, her priests; and so much so, that only a knowledge of their abiding-places can render their teachings serviceable to the world at large. Thus Bulwer declares, that "the best commentary to the German genius is a visit to the German scenery." Longellow

has nearly the same thing. "To understand and feel the popular poetry of Germany," he says, "we must be familiar with the German landscape." And so of other people and other climes. Again, reflecting in a retrospective manner, an Howadiji discovers in the landscape of Egypt to-day, the consonant traces, that tell of her ancient literature. In the language of that beautiful prose-poem, we are told that "the forms of the landscape harmonize with the forms of the impression of Egypt in the mind, and no scenery is grander in its impressions, for none is so symbolical. There is no record of anything like lyrical poetry in the history of the elder Egyptians. Their theology was the sombre substance of their life. This fact of history, the Howadiji sees before he reads. Nature is only epic here. She has no little lyrics of green groves, and blooming woods, and sequestered lanes—no lovely pastoral landscape. But from every point, the Egyptian could behold the desert heights, and the river and the sky. This grand and solemn nature has imposed upon the art of the land, the law of its own being and beauty." We cannot refrain from quoting another passage, which bears more particularly upon the influence to which the art of Egypt was subjected. "The Howadiji sits, musing or reading before the cabin, the stratified sand-mountain side, with a stately arcade of palms on the smooth green below, floats upon his eye, through the serene sky, as the Ideal of that mighty Temple which Egyptian architecture struggles to rear—and he feels that he beholds the seed, that flowered at last in the Parthenon and all Greek architecture."

Taking a more particular view of the influence upon Art, we cannot fail to notice that the characteristic landscape of Spain has given a tinge to her schools of painting, as well as imparted a gloomy severity to the character of her people. On the other hand, deprived of everything like a diversified landscape, we see the Dutch attaining that success in *genre* and still-life paintings, for which they are so widely celebrated. In an art so general in its interpretation as music, we are not sure that its character is correspondent in the same degree with the outward aspect of Nature. Yet we can but feel that there is something in the wildness of an Indian's song corresponding to his haunts in the forest; and in the note of a Scottish bagpipe, it often seems to us, that the spirit of the craggy rocks of the Highlands is speaking his tremulous tale. Certainly in the light brilliancy of Italian song, there is something that reminds us of her sunny atmosphere; and in the greater depth of the German, there is a trace of the spirits that haunt her old castles, and people the shades of the Harz and the Black Forest.

To return to the more general question, we cannot demur from the authority of such a witness as Humboldt. "How powerfully did the skies of Greece act upon its inhabitants!" he writes; "Was it not from these genial climes that our forefathers of the Crusades brought back to Europe, then relapsing into barbarism, the seeds of a gentler civilization? The poetical works of the Greeks," he adds, "and the ruder songs of the primitive northern races, owe much of their peculiar character to the forms of plants and animals, and the moun-

tain valleys in which their poets dwelt, and to the air, which surrounded them."

If we were to select one element of Nature, which perhaps more than any other serves a purpose for the elevation of Art, it should be *water*, the one which seems more readily to succumb to the desires of the poet and the painter. The gleam of water in a landscape is like the brightest spot in song; and as all the powers of the bard seem concentrated in that one place, so the objects of surrounding nature meet in reflection here, even to the most distant mountains that roll their outline along the horizon. Look at the number of poets, whom we designate by their favorite streams—the Bard of Avon, the Minstrel of the Tweed, the Sage of Rydal; Campbell loved his Clyde, Greta sounded in the ear of Southey; "Stream-loving Coila" knew the youth of Burns, and the Ettrick Shepherd has given a fame to that tributary of the Yarrow; while the little "Charles" has not gone without the meed of song from two of our own bards, near dwellers on its banks.

Although we have seen that the Influence of Nature may be of effect in giving a direction to national art, or placing a stamp upon it, yet we are not to surmise that it wholly depends upon these influences, nor even that their effect is equal to some other causes, that may be at work in the character of the people. There is in Italian art an equality with the variations of Italian scenery, mountain and plain. But when we come to English art (taking it in its broad sense, and including poetry), we cannot find in the scenery of their island anything at all commensurate with the greatness of Shakespeare, and her chiefest artists. Indeed, as Ruskin says, "The English character is directly opposed to the English scenery." We would not certainly describe the English people, by the epithet that the French would apply to her landscapes, *petite*. The ocean, the prairie, and the desert, afford scenery in its extent and phenomena, that partakes of the truly sublime; yet where can we point to any sailor, or hunter, or wandering Arab, as a great poet. It has often been asked, why America has not produced her poet, whose greatness would be equal to the grandeur of her mountains, her lakes and her forests. If the askers of such questions would but consider the case as history gives it, they would not rely upon these physical qualities of our land for the production of their required poet. Switzerland has some of the grandest scenery in the world, yet few have failed to remark that she has had no poet, but of the lowest kind. In fine, we must look to other influences than those of outward Nature, to begot in us that spirit of all art, which shall at some day or other, culminate in a mighty representative of the American mind.

JUSTIN WINSOR.

THE inside of the Cathedral of Bâle (built, from 1010 to 1019, by Emperor Henry the Second) is being restored on a large scale. The expenses are met by voluntary subscriptions, which, we learn, are tendered with the munificence befitting the patriotic republicans of one of the wealthiest towns in Switzerland. Herr Merian-Burkhardt alone has given a sum of 10,000 francs.

ROMAN RENAISSANCE.

PRIDE OF SCIENCE.

(Continued from *Stones of Venice*.)

Nothing can be done well in Art, except by vision; scientific principles and experiences, are helps to the eye, as a microscope is; and they are of exactly as much use *without* the eye. No science of perspective, nor of anything else, will enable us to draw the simplest natural line accurately, unless we see it and feel it. Science is soon at her wits ends. All the professors of perspective in Europe, could not, by perspective, draw the line of curve of a sea beach; nay, could not outline one pool of the quiet water left among the sand. The eye and hand can do it, nothing else. All the rules of aerial perspective that ever were written, will not tell me how sharply the pines on the hill-top are drawn at this moment on the sky. I shall know if I see them, and love them, not till then. I may study the laws of atmospheric gradation for four score years and ten, and I shall not be able to draw so much as a brick kiln through its own smoke, unless I look at it; and that in an entirely humble and unscientific manner, ready to see all that the smoke, my master, is ready to show me, and expecting to see nothing more.

So that all the knowledge a man has must be held cheap, and neither trusted nor respected the moment he comes face to face with Nature. If it help him, well; if not, but, on the contrary, thrust itself upon him in a contradictory and impertinent temper, and venture to set itself in the slightest degree, in opposition to, or comparison with, his sight, let it be disgraced forthwith. And the slave is less likely to take too much upon herself, if she has not been bought with a high price. All the knowledge an artist needs, will, in these days, come to him almost without his seeking; if he has far to look for it he may be sure he does not want it. Prout became Prout, without knowing a single rule of perspective to the end of his days; and all the perspective in the *Encyclopædia* will never produce us another Prout.

And observe, also, knowledge is not only very often unnecessary, but is often *untrustworthy*. It is inaccurate, and betrays us where the eye would have been true to us. Let us take the single instance of the knowledge of aerial perspective, of which the moderns are so proud, and see how it betrays us in various ways. First, by the conceit of it, which often prevents us enjoying work in which higher and better things were thought of than effects of mist. The other day I showed a fine impression of Albert Durer's "St. Hubert," to a modern engraver, who had never seen it nor any other of Albert Durer's works. He looked at it for a minute contemptuously, then turned away: "Ah, I see that man did not know much about aerial perspective!" All the glorious work and thought of the mighty master, all the redundant landscape, the living vegetation, the magnificent truth of line, were dead letters to him, because he happened to have been taught one particular piece of knowledge which Durer despised.

But not only in the conceit of it, but in the inaccuracy of it, this science betrays us. Aerial perspective, as given by the modern